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"THE 'BLOND' ESKIMOS
By DIAMOND JENNESS

INTENSE interest was aroused in the scientific world when Mr. Stefánsson announced his discovery of 'blond' Eskimos in Victoria Island, and suggested that here in this remote corner of the Arctic we might find traces of the old Norse settlers who disappeared from Greenland in the course of the fifteenth century. General Greely at once made a comprehensive survey of all the literature dealing with the Eskimos, and published in the National Geographic Magazine an interesting compilation of the remarks of earlier writers on the varying physical types that are found among that people. (1) Several travellers had noticed individuals who markedly resembled Indians; Collinson had observed aquiline noses and a Jewish caste of countenance in Walker Bay, in Victoria Island, and Murdoch had noticed the same thing at Point Barrow, in Alaska; Petitot had seen a Scotch- or Russian-looking individual in the Mackenzie River region, while one or two other travellers elsewhere had observed Scandinavian types. These variations were noticed all the way from Greenland to Alaska, and as far south as Labrador; for to the authors quoted by General Greely we have to add, besides Murdoch to whom we have already referred, the old Jesuit missionary Père Lafitau, who says of

"1. National Geographic Magazine, 1912, pp. 1225-1239."

the Labrador Eskimos, 'They are tall, well built, and whiter than other savages. They allow their beards to grow, and have curly hair which they cut below the ears. Their hair is almost always black, [258] but a few have light-colored hair (Fr. blonds), and some red hair (Fr. roux), like the people of Northern Europe.' (1)

Mr. Stefánsson first encountered the Copper Eskimos at Cape Bexley, in Dolphin and Union Strait. Even there, he says, he had noticed a certain peculiarity in some of the natives, a certain lightness in the color of the moustache and beard that he had never observed farther west. But it was only when he crossed the strait and met the Hanerak and Puivlik groups of southwestern Victoria Island that he became fully conscious of the change. 'We had been told by our guide,' he says, 'that we should find the Victoria Islanders of a light complexion, with fair beards, but still we were not prepared for what we saw.... Here (in Victoria Island) are men with abundant three-inch-long beards, a light brown in their outer parts, but darker towards the middle of the chin. The faces and proportions of the body remind of "stocky," sunburned, but naturally fair Scandinavians.' Mr. Stefánsson finally sums up the physical characteristics of the Copper Eskimos as follows: 'Of something less than a thousand persons, ten or more have blue eyes ... some of them eradicate their beards ... but of those who have beards

"1. Moeurs des sauvages ameriquains, par le Père Lafitau, de la Compagnie de Jésus, Paris, 1724, vol. I, p. 55f."

a good many have light brown ones; no one seen has light hair of the golden Scandinavian type, but some have dark-brown and rusty-red hair, the redness being usually more pronounced on the forehead than on the back of the head, and perhaps half the entire population have eyebrows ranging from a dark brown to a light brown or nearly white. A few have curly hair.' Mr. Stefánsson then compares the form of head of the Copper Eskimos with that of the Eskimos in other regions, and comes to the conclusion, (1) that the Copper Eskimos show clear evidences of hybridism, and (2) that their European-like appearance is most easily explained by the theory that they have European blood in their veins, for which the old Scandinavian colony in Greenland furnishes the only explanation. (2)

The southern party of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, of [259] which I was the ethnologist, had its head-quarters at Bernard Harbor, on the mainland side of Dolphin and Union Strait, from 1914 to 1916. During two entire years we maintained an almost unbroken intercourse with the Eskimo inhabitants both of the mainland and of southern Victoria Island, from Cape Bexley at the west end of Dolphin and Union Strait, to Bathurst Inlet at the east end of Coronation Gulf; in addition we encountered a few natives, six adults and two children, from Prince Albert Sound, on the west coast of Victoria Island. Physical measurements were taken of 82 men and 42 women, and at

"2. My Life with the Eskimo, p. 192ff."

the same time observations were made concerning their eyes and hair and other external features. In summarizing the results, in so far as they bear on the question of the 'blondness' of these Eskimos and the possible infusion of European blood, I have not considered it necessary to separate the Victoria Islanders from the natives of the mainland south of them (although it might easily have been done), because all the tribes in this region constantly intermarry, and in any one group representatives may be found of half a dozen different tribes, both from the mainland and from Victoria Island.

Of the 82 males that were measured 70 had eyes that ranged in color from light brown to dark brown. In the remaining 14 the predominating color was brown, but it was tinged with grey (in one case a greenish-grey) or a milky blue. Closer examination showed that this second color was usually present only on the fringe of the iris, often only on the lower or the upper edge, and that it extended occasionally into the sclerotis; very rarely did it cover the whole of the iris. Of the women only two out of the 42 showed bluish or greyish tinge, the remainder all having brown eyes. (1)

"1. The color of the iris among the total number of East Greenlanders examined (136) must be designated as brown with certain nuances; blackish-brown, dark-brown, greyish-brown-- with only a single exception, a twenty-year old girl from Umanak, who had blue eyes.' (Meddelelser om Grønland, vol. XXXIX, p. 177.)"

It is a significant fact that in every one of the 16 cases of light-colored eyes the native was either middle-aged or well advanced in years; the youngest could hardly have been less than 35 years of age, and the majority were probably 40 to 50. Apparently, [260] therefore, it is very rare in children. Further, the light coloration was sometimes more marked in one eye than in the other. It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that it is only a secondary characteristic, indicating probably a diseased condition. Dr. D. S. Neumann, the health officer of the Bureau of Education in northern Alaska, thought that it might be due to repeated attacks of snow-blindness, when it would naturally be more apparent in the older people, and among the men more than among the women. He kindly examined with me a number of Eskimos from the King and the Diomede Islands, and from Cape Prince of Wales, who happened to be in Nome at the time of my visit. The results were very instructive. Out of 67 natives, adults and children, only two were found to be absolutely free from any eye disease. Ten out of 13 King Islanders showed arcus senilis to a greater or less extent, and one rupture of the eyeball. Of 14 Diomede Islanders 10 had arcus senilis, 3 the same disease combined with pterygium, and 1 rupture of the eyeball; while out of 40 Cape Prince of Wales natives 21 had arcus senilis, 14 both arcus senilis and pterygium, 3 keratits and arcus senilis, and two granulated lids. It required careful examination in many instances to detect the signs of disease, but wherever arcus senilis was very pronounced there was

the same bluish-grey coloration of the eye as I had noticed among the Copper Eskimos. It may be that future researches will show other causes for the variations in eye color; nevertheless the fact remains, that as far as my own observations enabled me to judge, the eyes of the Copper Eskimos differed in no respect from those of the natives in northern Alaska.

Although no correlation can be expected between the color of the eye and its shape, yet it is interesting to notice that there was the same variation in shape among the 16 light-eyed Copper Eskimos as among the other natives of their race. Two of the 14 men had perfectly 'straight' eyes, while the remaining 12 showed the 'Mongolian' fold to a greater or less extent. In one of the women the fold was strongly marked. Every variety of shape is found indeed among all the tribes of Eskimos, from full 'Mongolian' to full 'European,' though the 'half-Mongolian,' i. e., the slight fold, is [261] perhaps the commonest type. We made no attempt to measure little children among the Copper Eskimos, but all whom I saw seemed to have very dark brown eyes with the 'Mongolian' curve more pronounced than in the case of the adults; Parry, it may be mentioned, noticed the same difference between children and adults among the Igluik Eskimos of Baffin Land. (1)

"1. Parry, Voyages, vol. IV, p. 78, 1835."

The next point to be considered is the color and shape of the hair. It is important to distinguish first of all between the hair of the head, the eyebrows, the moustache, and the beard. Among several races, including Europeans, it is usual for the moustache and beard to be a little lighter in color than the hair of the head. In the case of the 124 Copper Eskimos whom I measured, the hair of the head was uniformly some shade of black or brownish-black. In a dull light, except on the most careful examination, it would have passed as black in almost every case; but against a strong light a dark brown tinge was usually noticeable, especially at the ends of the hair. Its shape was seldom absolutely straight and lank; there were usually slight ripples in it, especially toward the ends. It might almost have been called 'wavy' hair in one or two instances if the term 'wavy' had not been technically applied to the much finer and more billowy hair of Europeans. I noticed that in many cases the hair seemed to begin a little farther back on the forehead than is uaual, giving an unreal appearance of height to the forehead; but there was no change of color in this part of the head that I could perceive. As for the glossiness remarked by earlier writers as so typical of Eskimo hair, it seemed to vary considerably from individual to individual. (2)

"2. In East Greenland the color of the hair is black or dark-brown (Meddl. om Gron., vol. XXXIX, p. 177."

The eyebrows were in most cases very sparse so that it was difficult to detect their real color; but in no one of the 124 cases that we examined were they lighter than a dark brown, save where they were becoming grey with old age. Neither the moustache nor the beard was ever thick or abundant, not [sic] did they attain to any great length. I can not help thinking that Back exaggerated somewhat when he said of the Eskimos on the Great Fish River that [262] 'they could not have nurtured a more luxurious growth of beard, or cultivated more flowing moustaches.' Certainly this was never the case among the Copper Eskimos we encountered, with whom neither the moustache nor the beard ever developed to any extent until they approach middle age; indeed the presence of a beard was considered by them as a certain sign of old age, or at least of advanced years. It is generally concentrated on the chin, with only a few sparse hairs scattered over the jowls; three inches would probably be the maximum length. In color it is usually a dark brownish-black, but not infrequently it is a rich brown, especially around the lips. Even in such cases, however, the hair on the chin is almost always a brownish-black, except when it is becoming grey with old age. There is some reason, therefore, to suspect that any unusually light color around the lips is due to some bleaching agent, perhaps the hot blood soup that the natives are always drinking; for in no case that we noticed was the hair of the head other than black, or a dark brownish-black.

The color of the skin ranged from a fairness almost as great as that of the average

Englishman, to the olive color of the Italian. Murdoch found the same differences at Point Barrow, in northern Alaska. He says, 'There appears to be much natural variation in the complexion, some women being nearly as fair as Europeans, while other individuals seem to have naturally a copper color.' (1) I compared my upper arm with the upper arms of a number of Copper Eskimos, and in some cases there was hardly any perceptible difference. Those portions of the skin, however, that are exposed to the weather, the face and the hands, tan to a darker color than the corresponding portions in Europeans, and this natural dark hue is increased in summer by an incrustation of dirt, for the natives practically never wash. Hence the traveller who judged of the color of the Eskimos by their complexion in winter would come to the conclusion that they are fair-skinned people, while another who saw them only in the summer would believe them to be as dark as Spaniards or even darker. There [263] is one point, however, that it is important to notice, and that is that there appears to be no connection whatever between the fairer skin color of some of the natives and blue or grey eyes.

Mr. Stefánsson gave some figures showing the proportion between the breadth of the head among the Copper Eskimos, and compared them with some figures that the veteran

"1. Ann. Rep. B.A.E., vol. 9, p. 36; cf. Simpson, Arctic Papers for the Expedition of 1875, p. 238, London, 1875.

anthropologist Dr. Boas had published from other Eskimos. (1) It is unfortunate that these particular measurements should have been chosen for comparison, for they are not the standard ones that are usually made by anthropologists in questions relating to race. Moreover most of the figures that are quoted from Dr. Boas are derived from skull measurements, and so are not strictly comparable with measurements derived from living natives; then again they are derived from a very limited number of skulls, and so can not be relied upon as establishing definite types. Three Mackenzie River Eskimo men whom I measured gave results that were practically identical with the measurements of the 82 Copper Eskimo men, which is totally at variance with Mr. Stefánsson's conclusions. (2) But until more measurements of this kind are published

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"1. Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. XIV, 1901, p. 60.

2. The three Mackenzie River men gave an index of 95.6, and the 82 Copper Eskimos 96. Three Alaskan natives from Point Hope gave an index of 99.1."

from other sources no real comparisons can be made on this basis between the different tribes of Eskimos, and certainly no conclusions can be drawn from them concerning the purity or otherwise of any particular branch of that race.

The best indications in regard to race, as far as physical measurements are concerned, are derived , according to the opinions of the leading anthropologists, from the stature, and the proportions of the length of the head to its breadth, i. e., the cephalic index. Now in selecting other Eskimo groups for comparison with the Copper Eskimos we ought to choose those which are admittedly the purest, and at the same time those from whom we have considerable amount of reliable anthropometric data. There is really only one group which answers to these two requirements, the Ammassalik Eskimos of East Greenland, who are regarded by Søren [264] Hansen, our chief authority, as 'a pure and unmixed Eskimo tribe without any ostensible traces of foreign elements.' (1) If, then, we compare the measurements obtained from the Copper Eskimos with the corresponding measurements obtained from East Greenland, we ought to be able to obtain some light on the purity or otherwise of the former people.

Taking the stature first, Hansen found that in East Greenland, the average height of 53 men was 1629 mm. (maximum 1760 mm. minimum 1486.) and of 38 women 1538 mm.

"1. Meddelelser om Grønland, vol XXXIX, p. 179."

(maximum 1650 mm., minimum 1430 mm.). My figures for 82 Copper Eskimo men gave an average of 1648 mm. (max. 1743 mm., min. 1495 mm.) and for 42 women 1564 mm. (max. 1660 mm., min. 1471.). It would appear, therefore, that on the average the stature of the Copper Eskimos, both males and females, is very slightly greater than that of the East Greenland natives. The difference is so little, however, that, if significant at all, it could very easily be accounted for by the different conditions of life in the two regions. As far as the stature is concerned, therefore, we have no evidence of Scandinavian admixture among the Copper Eskimos. Indeed, the evidence we have might almost be said to point against it, for in southwestern Greenland, where there ha has been admittedly a considerable admixture of Danish blood, the average height of 21 men (Hansen's figures again) was only 1576 mm. (max. 1684 mm., min. 1520 mm.) and of 24 females only 1518 mm. (max. 1602 mm., min. 1452 mm.); that is to say, in southwestern Greenland, where there is Scandinavian infusion, the stature is slightly below that of the pure-blood East Greenlanders, whereas among the Copper Eskimos it is slightly above. (2)

"2. 13 Eskimo men of Point Hope, in northern Alaska, gave an average stature of 1673 mm."

Let us consider next the cephalic indices of the Copper Eskimos (breadth of the head as compared with its length), and compare them with Hansen's figures from East Greenland. Here we find a very marked resemblance. The average cephalic index of the 82 Copper Eskimo men was 77.6, and of the 42 women 76.7, whereas in East Greenland Holm's figures, as given by Hansen, are 76.9 for [265] 53 men and 75.6 for 38 women. The differences in the figures are so slight as to be practically negligible; they might, indeed, almost disappear if we had a greater number of cases to go by. Certainly in themselves they lend no support to any theory of race intermixture for the Copper Eskimos which would not be equally true of the natives of East Greenland. (1)

It is quite possible, however, that although no single feature taken by itself should give definite evidence of an intermixture of races, yet the general appearance of the natives, more particularly their features, might in many cases afford some slight presumption of it. After all we should hardly expect on a priori grounds that the Eskimos would be an absolutely pure race, meaning by pure that from those early times when first they separated from the rest of the human family and developed peculiar characteristics of their own they have preserved themselves rigidly free from all intermixture with other races. There is perhaps not a single race on the face of the earth which would answer to this definition. Now a fusion of races inevitably brings about

"1. The 13 Point Hope Eskimo men gave an average cephalic index of 78.2"

modifications in the physical types, as one descendant harks back to one line of ancestors and another to another. Within definite limits, therefore, a certain amount of heterogeneity, over and above what might be due to the varying conditions of life, is to be expected from every race, although for thousands of years it may have kept itself aloof from every other. It is interesting to remember in this connection that Petitot, the French missionary in the Mackenzie delta, speaks of four Eskimos with whom he travelled as presenting so many distinct types; one of them looked like a Scotchman or a Russian. Rasmussen, again, mentions a native of Cape York, in northern Greenland, who 'did not resemble in the least the type that is usually regarded as Eskimo. His face was narrow and clear-cut, his nose slightly aquiline ... he was more like a gypsy than an Eskimo.' Different explorers will naturally find different analogies according to their earlier experiences. Thus in the very region where Mr. Stefánsson was reminded of 'stocky, sunburned, but naturally fair Scandinavians,' Collinson had particularly remarked on the Jewish caste of countenance.[266]

I myself seemed to distinguish among the Copper Eskimos three distinct types, which, while they must not be taken to represent so many distinct races, would serve to warn us that we should not expect to find a wholly homogeneous people. There was first the type that all writers have so consistently depicted as peculiarly Eskimo, the rather fair-skinned native with lank black hair, somewhat short and squat, but with a round pleasant face, twinkling dark eyes that appear a little aslant as among Mongols, a

rather flat nose with a low bridge, and high cheek-bones. The second type was taller, with a longer face, a chin that was often pointed, eyes that occasionally appeared a little aslant, but more often were quite straight like our own, and a nose rather big and aquiline. A common type intermediate between these two gives a square, rather block-shaped face.

The third type was very different from either of the preceding two, at least in its extreme forms. One might almost be tempted to call it a Melanesian type, so short is the face, so thick the lips, and so broad and flat the nose. In all the features there is a coarseness and brutality that is altogether foreign to the average Eskimo. Dress such a man in European clothes and the most learned ethnologist might be puzzled to determine his race.

Whether such a division into types has any independent value, and whether there are similar types among the Eskimos elsewhere, we have not the date at present to decide. There is a certain amount of evidence to prove that many of the inland natives of northern Alaska are taller and more slender, and have longer and narrower faces, than the Eskimos farther east, and admixture with Indian blood is the usual reason assigned for it. It is possible that the same admixture has taken place, to a more limited extent, among the Copper Eskimos also; but apart from this, there seems not the slightest indication of any racial intermixture that we can trace, and certainly not the faintest